

met with varying levels of success, but HDP has been honored to work with reformers in both countries as they strive to throw off the shackles of their authoritarian past.

The world has watched over the past week as Russia's citizens have stood up and demanded greater political freedom and transparency, which is indeed a hopeful step. However, there is another country in Eastern Europe that has resisted all efforts to transform itself into a modern democracy and maintains itself as an authoritarian dictatorship. The country of Belarus remains Europe's only dictatorship. Under the unyielding grip of dictator Aleksandr Lukashenko, the people of Belarus are denied the basic freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. The press is heavily restricted and intimidated. The internet is censored. Independent nongovernmental organizations are not allowed to operate. There is little freedom of religion. And 100,000 Belarusians have been barred from leaving the country. For the people of Belarus, the oppression of the past did not dissolve with the Soviet Union, but remains a bitter reality.

While their neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe are able to freely elect their own leaders, Belarusians have witnessed one stage-managed election after another under the current regime. Lukashenko has held illegal referenda to change the constitution, eliminate term limits, and dissolve an elected parliament. In December 2010, the Government of Belarus conducted a presidential election that failed to meet basic standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and followed that election by detaining and beating more than 600 peaceful opposition protestors. Seven of nine opposition presidential candidates were jailed and what remains of the independent media was attacked. Rather than address the OSCE's criticisms, the OSCE was kicked out of the country by the government.

To highlight the continued abuses of the Lukashenko regime and once again demonstrate Congressional support for the aspirations of the Belarusian people, the House voted to renew the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, with a unanimous vote on July 6 of this year. This bill not only imposes additional sanctions on the leaders of the corrupt Belarusian regime, but allows the United States to work with groups who are promoting freedom and democracy, particularly media groups such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Voice of America, European Radio for Belarus, and Belsat.

The U.S. Congress will continue to stand with the Belarusian people as they fight for self determination and the rule of law. I look forward to the day that they are able to join their European neighbors on the right side of history with a lasting, peaceful and prosperous democracy.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the language included in this bill

that would remove current barriers for states to strengthen the unemployment program through optional drug testing. The purpose of the unemployment insurance program is to be a safety net, a bridge to reemployment. However, when beneficiaries choose to abuse illegal drugs they are no longer at their competitive best within the jobs market.

That is why I have proposed legislation, H.R. 3601 the "Ensuring Quality in the Unemployment Insurance Program (EQUIP) Act," that would require screenings for applicants of unemployment insurance. Applicants would be screened using a non-invasive questionnaire that has a 94 percent accuracy rate. If identified as likely to use drugs, an applicant for unemployment would be required to pass a drug test as a condition of benefits. This non-invasive practice has been upheld by state courts in New Jersey, Texas and Indiana. A federal court in West Virginia upheld that state's practice of screening applicants for Social Security Disability Insurance.

The screening would not increase federal spending. The estimated cost is \$12 per person. This would be more than offset by reducing the \$7.5 billion budget for the controversial Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) and Consumers Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OPs), which was established to ration health care expenditures.

At one of the several listening sessions I had with business owners earlier this year, I had an employer tell me of an overwhelming response for job openings. There was just one problem: half the people who applied could not even pass a drug test. Another told me about an employee they had to temporarily lay off when times were tight. A month later when he contacted his former employee to offer him a new position, he declined because unemployment was paying the bills. With our budget woes of more than \$15 trillion in debt, how can we justify using unemployment insurance to pay someone not to work when they have voluntarily taken themselves out of the hiring pool? That is what we are doing when someone on unemployment is using drugs.

Under the current system, workers can earn up to 26 weeks through employer contribution but are eligible for 99 weeks of benefits under current law. Your tax dollars make up the difference. Maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of programs like unemployment insurance has to be our society's goal.

Drug screening beneficiaries incentivizes individuals to not abuse drugs, which would otherwise render them unfit to be employed. Some have said this proposal asks too much of those who have lost their jobs, but asking someone who is unemployed to do his or her part by staying eligible to work is common sense, not draconian.

I look forward to working with the Committee on this proposal and a hearing in the spring.

URGING TURKEY TO SAFEGUARD ITS CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, the text of House Resolution 306 could lead to

false conclusions about Turkey. Make no mistake: Turkey has taken concrete steps to improve religious freedom through a series of meaningful initiatives. Moreover, Turkey is a secular, modernized NATO ally that provides indispensable military and diplomatic support to the United States and our allies. Its efforts with respect to religious inclusion are welcome and worthy of recognition.

In September, for example, Secretary Clinton praised Turkey's continued progress in enhancing religious freedom, stating:

We have also seen Turkey take serious steps to improve the climate for religious tolerance. The Turkish government issued a decree in August that invited non-Muslims to reclaim churches and synagogues that were confiscated 75 years ago. I applaud Prime Minister Erdogan's very important commitment to doing so.

Long before H. Res. 306 was introduced, the Turkish Government was enhancing religious freedom. For example:

In May 2010, the Prime Ministry issued a circular underlining that Turkey's non-Muslim citizens share with all other Turkish citizens the right to enjoy and maintain their own identities and cultures in parallel with the national identity and culture of Turkey.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul recently has been permitted to conduct masses at religiously significant venues that had been rendered museums due to disuse.

In November 2010, Turkish authorities returned a former orphanage to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate following a decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The attorney representing the Patriarchate declared, "This marks a first in Europe. Turkey became the first country to implement a decision of the ECHR by returning the property. This should be an example for other countries."

Since the original text of H. Res. 306 was introduced, Turkey amended its Law on Foundations to state that immovable properties, cemeteries, and fountains (of the non-Muslim community foundations registered in the name of Turkish public institutions) will be returned to the relevant non-Muslim community foundations, upon those non-Muslim foundations' request.

On a larger scale, Turkey has been an indispensable ally and friend of the United States since it joined NATO almost 60 years ago (in 1952). Given Turkey's strategic location and maintenance of the second largest military in NATO, this should come as no surprise. Currently, NATO is installing radar systems in Turkey and Romania as part of the regional anti-ballistic missile defense system. Moreover, when NATO passed Resolution 1973, which enforced a no-fly zone in Libya, Turkey helped lead a NATO-led coalition, after playing a major role in deliberations with the United States and other key allies. Turkey also had a key role in negotiating the release of four New York Times reporters who were captured during fighting in Libya.

With regard to U.S. operations in Afghanistan, Turkey:

Has made available its Konya Air Base and other airports for the deployment of aircraft and allies' cargo aircraft in support of ISAF operations.

Has deployed five Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) and has also conducted in-place training of 8,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) members and training in Turkey for an additional 1,000 Afghan troops.